Singletons and Small Schools

Structuring Meaningful Professional Learning Teams for Every Teacher

Aaron Hansen

Solution Tree PLC Associate | Middle School Principal
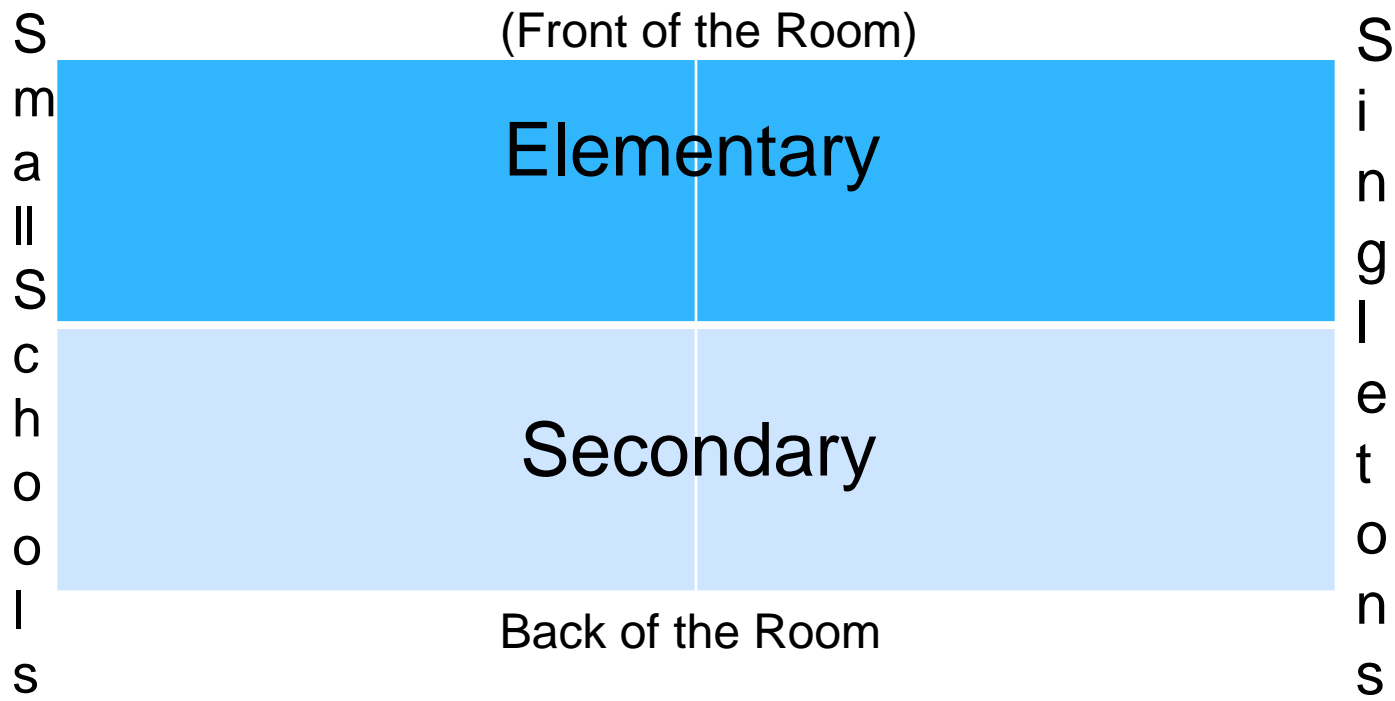
aarhanse@whitepine.k12.nv.us

Singletons and Small Schools

Aaron Hansen, Middle School Principal, Solution Tree Associate.

Hey Everyone! Welcome!

For the purpose of arranging learning groups, please do your best to arrange yourselves according to the chart below. Thanks!

(Front of the Room)

Small Schools | Elementary | Singletons
| Secondary |

Back of the Room

Who ARE Singletons?

One of the greatest challenges in any PLC is finding meaningful learning partnerships *for the singletons*—art teachers, band directors, media specialists, foreign language teachers—in a building.

Teachers working *in small schools* or unique subject areas often struggle to find partners, too. When you've only got one physics—or third grade, or biology—teacher, who can they learn with?
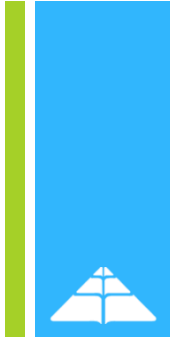
Session Outcomes:
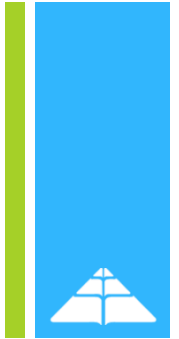
To explore 5 scenarios schools have used to overcome the challenges of implementing the PLC process in a small school or as a singleton.

- ✓ Structural change
- ✓ Vertical teams
- ✓ Interdisciplinary teams
- ✓ Support role
- ✓ Electronic teams

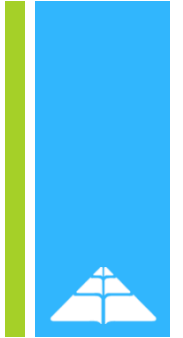To develop the beginnings of an action plan for overcoming your ***unique*** challenges.

Checking In

- **Who are we** as a group?
  - Small schools?
    - Elementary or Secondary
  - Subject Singletons- Music, Art, Vocational, Media Specialist, Language, etc.
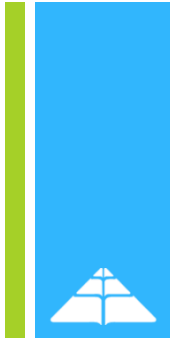 - Administrators?
  - Teachers?
  - Other?

Checking In

As a small school or singleton teacher, *what challenges* do you currently face in collaborating in a meaningful way?

Chart your responses with your learning partners.

Collaboration Lite

"Mere collegiality won't cut it. Even discussions about curricular issues or popular strategies *can feel good* but go nowhere. The right image to embrace is of a group of teachers who meet regularly to share, refine and assess the impact of lessons and strategies continuously to help increasing numbers of students learn at higher levels."

Mike Schmoker

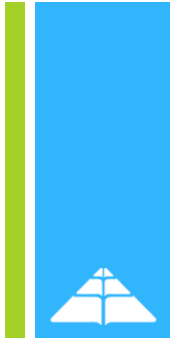# The Dilemma of Small Schools and Singletons
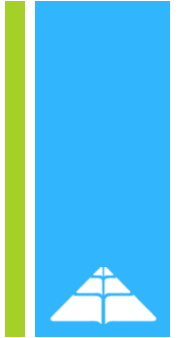
With few if any common-content teachers, how do we collaborate among ourselves to become members of true professional learning communities?

Our focus on learning must be reduced to *common denominators* so that meaningful collaboration can occur.
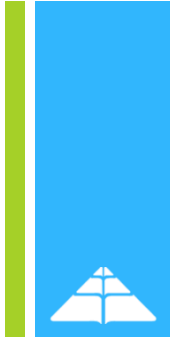
Rethinking Structures for Singletons

In many schools the structure is set up in opposition to collaboration and most people **will not work** in opposition to the structure.

"The truth is that the system changes individuals more often than individuals change the system."

-Michael Fullan

+

Rethinking Structures for Singletons

Answer the following questions while reading about White Pine Middle School's work to change structures:

What are *the strengths* of creating teams of teachers who are teaching the same subjects? What are *the weaknesses*?
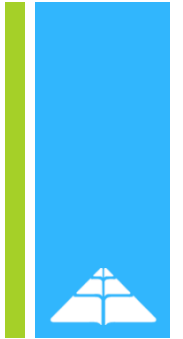
If this were an approach that you were going to implement in your building, *what barriers* would you need to overcome?
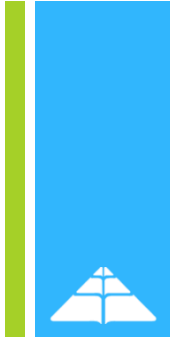
Vertical and Interdisciplinary Teams

A Process for Vertical and Interdisciplinary Teams

(1). Organize teams based on what learning goals teachers have *in common*.

(2). Focus on those issues which are common rather than those that are not.

(3). Identify the most important *common outcome*.

A Process for Vertical and Interdisciplinary Teams

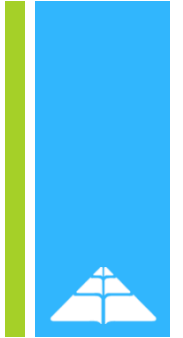(4). Develop a method of assessment, a rubric, and anchors.

(5). Calibrate scoring and evaluate results.

(6). Come back to the table with *common strategies* designed to improve performance.

Here's What's Different

Although the unit assessments are not exactly *"common"* from one grade level to the next, the skills often are.

In groups, determine what *"common"* skills could be focused on in Language Arts.

By providing student performance targets in each grade level within an essential skill, vertical teams can have rich collaboration about student learning.

Practice in Action
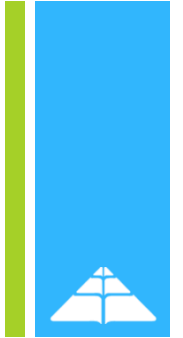
Working together, kindergarten, first and second grade teachers could develop a ***shared rubric*** defining the elements of a good sentence that is used by all teachers at all grade levels.

The ***skills are common*** even when the task isn't.

Sentence Rubric

⭐ I wrote some letters or words.

⭐⭐ I wrote a simple sentence with a noun and a verb.

⭐⭐⭐ My sentence has a noun, verb AND correct capitalization, spacing, and a punctuation mark.

⭐⭐⭐⭐ My sentence is about one topi using a noun, verb, and adjective or elaboration. I use a capital letter, spacing, and punctuation.

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ My sentence is ab topic using a noun and adjective. I u capital letter, spac
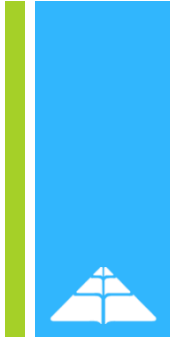
Practice in Action

Imagine that you are working as a member of a high school social studies team composed of World History, U.S. History, and Government teachers.

What could some ***common outcomes*** for your learning team be?

Practice In Action

Examples :
- Making and defending an argument.
- Relating the past to the present.
- Synthesizing information.
- Critically reading and analyzing primary sources.

What is the Common Denominator?

Teams should set goals based on Essential Skills that are universal.

+ Practice in Action

If your imaginary learning team decided to focus on critically reading and analyzing primary sources as its most important common outcome, what would *your next steps* be?

Practice in Action

Do all students take the exact same assessment?

Is there a different primary source for each content area?

Is the common assessment multiple choice or constructed response?

(There are no right or wrong answers!)
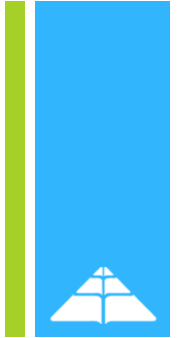
Pre-assess
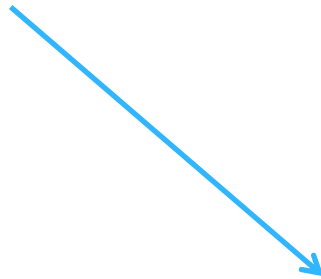
Post- Assess

Over time the team can see if the common strategy they have chosen is working to improve students' learning of essential skills, even if the content is different.

+ Reflection…

Talk with your group.

How can you apply what you have learned so far to your situation?

Singletons Who Support

"Momma T"

Synchronous and Asynchronous Tools for Singletons

Note: All tutorials and materials for this portion of the presentation can be found online at:

http://bit.ly/twitterforsingletons

Tools for Developing Teams
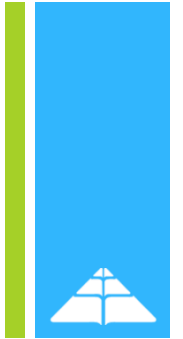
"The core work of electronic learning teams *is the same* as the core work of teams who meet in person: investigating practice, developing common assessments, looking at student learning data.

Digital tools just make it possible for that work to be done from remote locations."

--Bill Ferriter

Twitter as an Electronic Starting Point

I struggle to find time for PD in my already crowded day. *With Twitter*, I can learn easily and from anywhere. Whenever I have a few minutes to spare---between classes, on lunch duty, waiting for flights at the airport, just before going to bed---I'm checking the messages posted by my Twitter network.

--Bill Ferriter

Finding Potential Partners in Twitter
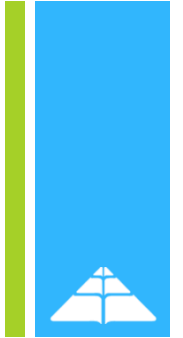
"Where do I *even begin*?" educators new to Twitter wonder…"What resources can help me find teachers and principals with the same interests and passions as mine?"

--Ferriter, Ramsden & Sheninger, Communicating and Connecting with Social Media

+ Mastery Connect and Solution Tree

masteryconnect.com/solutiontree
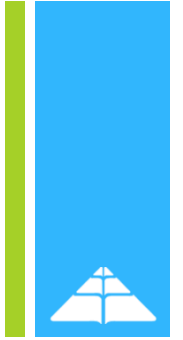
Cross-Discipline Teams

Rethinking Structures for Singletons

Answer the following questions while reading about Rolla High School's work to change structures:

- What are *the strengths* of creating a team of singleton teachers focused on a common practice like intervening on behalf of struggling students? What are *the weaknesses*?

- If this were an approach that you were going to implement in your building, *what barriers* would you need to overcome?

Success for All

"The "You've Got Mail" program we developed this year really has been powerful beyond belief! Last week we invited 35 students and their parents to a special recognition luncheon. The parent support was incredible…They were so very gracious and appreciative of the invite and opportunity.

We, as a team, know without a doubt that this small effort (in the large scheme of things) had very deep impact on the kids. We can't really measure it just now, but witnessed it that day."

Doyla Mentis

The Role of the Administration in Supporting PLCs for Singletons.

Challenges to District Wide PLC's
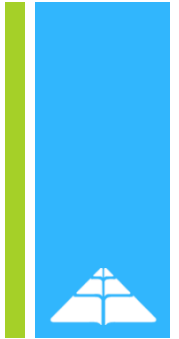
- What is the expectation?

- How will teams be held accountable and by whom?

It takes an increased level of planning to ensure success.

Leadership Matters

"One of the great ironies in education is that it takes strong and effective educational leaders to create truly empowered people who are capable of **sustaining improvement** after the leader has gone."

Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour

+ Music Common Assessment

THIRD & FOURTH GRADE

Reading Rhythm
10 = Working Beyond
9 = Achieving
6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Labeling a Melody
10 = Working Beyond
7—9 = Achieving
2—6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Note Names Pwrpt
10 = Working Beyond
7—9 = Achieving
2—6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Pentatonic Performance
Working Beyond: Performs melody with all pitches correct, in rhythm, and with a steady beat
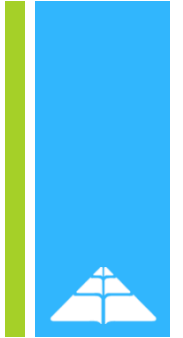Achieving: Performs melody correctly with no more than two inaccurate pitches and with or without accurate rhythm or steady beat
Progressing: Performs melody with more than two inaccurate pitches
Working Below: Pitch reading ability is not apparent

Individual Singing
Achieving: Pattern is sung in tune
Progressing: Pattern is sung higher or lower but intervals are fairly accurate
Working Below: Pattern is not sung, or the singing voice is not used

Orchestra Pwrpt
21—22 = Working Above
15—20 = Achieving
4—14 = Progressing
0—3 = Working Below

What Changed?
10 = Working Beyond
7—9 = Achieving
2—6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Musician Madness
10 = Working Beyond
7—9 = Achieving
2—6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Stick It To Me #1
4—5 = Achieving
2—3 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Let's Listen
10 = Working Beyond
7—9 = Achieving
2—6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

FIFTH & SIXTH GRADE

Reading/Writing Rhythm
12—13 = Working Beyond
9—11 = Achieving
2—8 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Mark the Music
10 = Working Beyond
7—9 = Achieving
2—6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

The Singing Voice
11—12 = Working Beyond
8—10 = Achieving
2—7 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

America
Working Beyond: In addition to accuracy, performance is confident and/or expressive
Achieving: Accurately sings the correct pitches with only minor intonation or interval problems
Progressing: Pitches, intervals, and/or intonation are inaccurate for one or more of the song phrases
Working Below: Singing voice is not apparent

Form and Function
10 = Working Beyond
7—9 = Achieving
2—6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Star Spangled Banner
32—34 = Working Beyond
24—31 = Achieving
4—23 = Progressing
0—3 = Working Below

Performances Movie
10—11 = Working Beyond
7—9 = Achieving
2—6 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Dynamics
14—15 = Working Beyond
11—13 = Achieving
2—10 = Progressing
0—1 = Working Below

Expression Reflection
Working Beyond: More than three of the expression vocabulary terms are used accurately in the description with __ ue used inaccurately
Achieving: Three of the expression vocabulary terms are used accurately in the description
Progressing: One or two of the expression vocabulary terms are used accurately
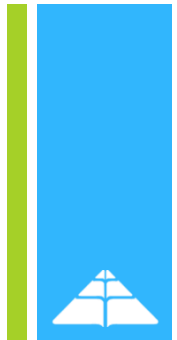Working Below: None of the expression vocabulary terms are used accurately

PLT Action Record

PLT Meeting Agenda / Action Record

TEAM NAME:

DATE: 1/13/10

Roles (should alternate throughout the year):
- ➤ Facilitator:
- ➤ Time Keeper:
- ➤ Recorder:

TEAM NORMS (To be reviewed at each meeting)

Purpose/Goal(s) for this meeting: Share and discuss literacy and art objectives, and lesson plans for 4th grade.

Meeting Topics:	**Desired Outcomes:**
1. Class management questions and discussion 2. Sharing and discussing Literacy and Art Lesson plans for 4th grade	1. Learning about each other's classroom management styles, pitfalls, and great ideas. 2. Continuing to integrate 4th literacy and visual art SCOS in creative and effective ways as shown in LPs. 3.

MEETING MINUTES :3:15-4:30

Team Members Present	Team Members Absent

Discussion / Decision Summary: Each member shared Lesson Plans(lp) and details of their art and lit lps. Members were able to see possibilities and a very stimulating discussion followed each LP that shared. Lessons shared included: Bookmaking and integrated NC regions, and other elements of NC, Illustration of Idioms, giving a 'viz art problem/scenario' to be solved by the student resulting in his/her artwork.....

Action Steps:	**Person Responsible:**
1. Team members will continue to use and create Art and Literacy LPs to share 3.	1. All members 2. 3.

Agenda items for next meeting:	**Artifacts attached from this meeting:**
1. Each member is to bring a lesson plan and a problem to solve 2. 3.	1. Slater shared his lp as a possible example 2. 3.

Date of Next Meeting: Feb 10, 2010
Date Feedback Submitted: 1/15/10

Monthly Action Plan

Monthly/Quarterly Action Plan

School_____

Department_____ Date_____

Learning Challenge Experienced By Students

Root Cause(s)/What evidence/data do you have for this need by students?

Strategies to Address Learning Challenge (Identify students who will receive the intervention, support, or acceleration.)

Timeline for Strategies

Resources Needed to Implement Strategies

Staff Development Need(s) To Address Learning Challenge or Complete Strategies		
Action	Follow-Up	Evaluation

Parent/Community Connection

Evaluation/Indicators of Success/Dates To Be Completed

_____   _____
Chair's Signature   Principal's Signature

CR/T28-33

Resources

DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best practice for enhancing student achievement.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Eaker, R., DuFour, R., & DuFour, R. (2007). *A Leader's Companion.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Reeves, D. (2010). *Next Steps in Newark: Transforming Leadership Decisions Into Student Results [Slide 26].* Retrieved from The Leadership and Learning Center: http://www.leadandlearn.com/ multimedia-resource-center/presentations?topic=9

Waters, J.T., & Marzano, R.J. (2006) *School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

This Session Developed Collaboratively By:

Aaron Hansen
Solution Tree Associate
aarhanse@whitepine.k12.nv.us
(Nevada)

Hector Garcia
Solution Tree Associate
hgarcia.edu@gmail.com
(Illinois)

Bill Ferriter
Solution Tree Author
wferriter@hotmail.com
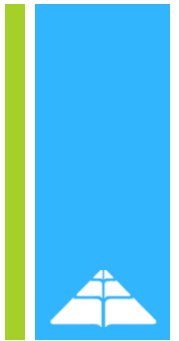(North Carolina)

Adam Young
Solution Tree Associate
adayoung@whitepine.k12.nv.us
(Nevada)

Aaron Hansen

Solution Tree Associate

Middle School Principal

aarhanse@whitepine.k12.nv.us

Follow Aaron on Twitter:

@AaronHansen77

To schedule professional development, contact **Solution Tree** at **(800) 733-6786.**